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FIRST THINGS *First*

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S. Department of Agriculture

A CALL FOR IMMEDIATE ENLISTMENT IN SOIL CONSERVATION

Curving rows—Contour tillage.

WI-22

. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

CURVING ROWS TO VICTORY

More food for the Army; less topsoil for the river bottoms—these are twin objectives of Agriculture's grand strategy.

Now is the time—this winter, this spring, not next year, or the year after—to begin to **curve the rows as the shortest way to victory.**

Now is the time to put into practice on the land some of those long-mulled-over plans for conservation.

Now is the time to make every thrust of the plow a mortal stab at the Axis.

FEB 13 1943

WHY CONSERVE?

Conservation practices protect soil, increase yields, boost income.

They save labor, help pay taxes, help buy war bonds.

They reduce power costs, save wear and tear on machinery and implements.

They make more valuable the farm investment, make the land doubly worth defending.

They stamp a farm definitely as a war plant, getting in its best licks for Uncle Sam.

First and foremost, of course, is conservation's effect on production. With millions of youths in the armed forces, let's put millions of farms in the brown and green uniform of conservation! Let's do the job, and do it right—one step at a time!

WORKING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

One step at a time means a practical beginning within the reach of every farmer.

It does not mean a complete program for maximum crops and minimum soil erosion—a program that may call for a variety of interlocking practices and perhaps considerable technique. It does not entail the installation of everything at once—perhaps strip cropping, terracing, fence shifting, woodlot management, provisions for wildlife, use of cover crops and buffer strips. It does not mean the establishment of full protection of the land's productive capacity. It is not the ultimate answer, because no one or two practices will suffice—**but it does supply a part of the answer that is within easy grasp of nearly everyone who lives on the land.**

THIS FAR, THIS YEAR

Two practices are suggested:

1. Contour tillage.
2. Grassing of waterways.

Let us assume that the farmer already is using his land for the purposes to which it is best suited, that he uses good seed, that he has good rotations of adapted, high-producing crops, and that he is applying such barnyard manure, lime, and fertilizers as may be required. The next sound move, surely, is the adoption of contour tillage and the grassing of waterways.

These two practices in themselves will go a long way toward getting the food and the raw materials the country needs, and safeguarding the land.

They are the logical first steps.

They can be taken with little or no expert help.

WHERE THE SLOPES ARE GENTLE

Grassed waterways belong in natural drainageways or depressions. They can be established by seeding a mixture of grasses and legumes, or by lifting the plow and leaving the sod when a meadow crop is being plowed up.

Grassed waterways prevent the formation of gullies but they do not stop the sheet erosion which shaves layer after layer of topsoil from the field.

Contour tillage, partner of grassed waterways, checks sheet erosion on gentle slopes. Each tillage mark across the slope—as contrasted to one running up and down hill—slows the water, enables it to percolate into the ground, reduces soil losses. Contour tillage cannot handle the job alone; it cannot take care of all the water that concentrates in the low spots. But it works well in the harness beside grassed waterways.

WHERE THE SLOPES ARE SHARP

As the angle goes up, the water comes down harder and faster. Here, something more than contour farming is needed.

On slopes not too long, contour strip cropping can handle the runoff. Strips of hay sandwiched between strips of grain shorten and divide the fall, slow the racing waters, disperse the moisture, store the raindrops. Grassed waterways here again are as important to success as when they are used in connection with contour farming alone.

Add length to a moderately sharp slope and the muddied waters boil and boom, ripping up plants and gashing the earth. Even strip-crop defenses then become inadequate, and **terraces** must be added. And unless the surplus water from terrace channels can be emptied onto permanent pasture or into natural grassed waterways, sodded outlets also must be provided.

If the slope is too long, or if the crop rotation includes a cultivated crop too often, it may be desirable to invoke both strip cropping and terracing on the same field.

But even though contour cropping or terracing are essential to **complete** conservation, on most farms contour tillage and the use of grassed waterways constitute the "A" in the erosion-control alphabet. These are sound and simple companion practices, on which many a farmer may safely build sensible and profitable **"starting practices."** They won't suffice for cultivated land of more than gentle slope but they will serve as an excellent introduction to modern farming methods.

THE BLUEPRINT IN MINIATURE

Contour tillage and grassed waterways now; a complete program of conservation tomorrow. From contour tillage and grassed waterways, the progression will be toward contour strip cropping, terracing, pasture improvement, cover crops, the plowing under of green manure, improved crop rotations—toward increased profits, and a larger degree of security for home and soil.

Now—in this season of planning and preparation—why not blueprint your farm for streamlined production in 1943? Why not think and work in terms of conservation?

The first step: **Contour tillage and grassed waterways.**

To provide drainage—grassed waterways.

Washington, D. C.
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